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Lincoln History Society
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Gentlemen:

I was engineer during the Civil War in the U. S. Navy, aboard the ironclad "Atlanta." At the near close of the war our vessel was in drydock at Norfolk, Virginia, making repairs. One Sunday the Captain was ashore and the balance of the officers were having dinner in the mess room. While eating, a messenger boy came down and said that President Lincoln and Secretary Stanton were aboard.

Being the ranking officer, I went on deck to meet them. They were both sitting on a wooden bench, and I saluted them and told them that the captain was ashore and I would be pleased to be of assistance to them if I could. The President said "We came here to get away from everybody." The fact was, I afterwards found out, they made the trip incognito, without flag on ship so as not to attract attention.

They sat and chatted together for fifteen or twenty minutes when news of their visit reached the navy yard and the Commandant whose arm was covered with gold stripes marched along the wall of the dock with a retinue of minor officials following him.

When the President saw them he said, "Come on Stanton, let's go." They immediately got up and went up on the dock wall as the commandant stood kowtowing to him. The president returned the Commandant's salute and then he and Stanton proceeded to their ship close by and sailed off.

In a short time afterwards our vessel was ordered to Newport News, the war being practically over and Richmond being taken. Vessels were running back and forth and one night while I was on duty in the engine room the messenger boy brought me a paper which had been dropped in the river, to dry, and in drying it I found the report of Lincoln's assassination.

F. O. BROWN